ROCKET ESPRESSO - GIOTTO EVOLUZIONE
A CLOSER LOOK

Overview

The Giotto Evoluzione arrives well packed (Rocket Espresso use heavy grade packaging and Bella Barista also double box the machines). Build quality is good with high quality (industry standard) components. Constructed using chrome plated steel, outside a black painted steel frame **inside.** The quality is noticeable when lifting the machine as the Giotto Evoluzione is a heavy machine.

This type of heat Exchanger (HX) machine internally, is slightly more complex than cheaper non HX machines, but much simpler to operate. There are fewer controls and no need to do anything special (apart from filling the water tank occasionally) to draw steam, hot water or espresso at any time. The Giotto Evoluzione automatically maintains the water level in the boiler as required and if run low on water in the tank the Giotto Evoluzione switches off the heating element as a safety precaution, **but in common other Giotto models, still has no low water alarm**.

The machine is attractive and fits comfortably under standard height kitchen cabinets. The Giotto Evoluzione compares favourably with other similar prosumer machines that have a heritage and reputation for looking good.

Some coffee enthusiasts buy second hand commercial machines that are very large and heavy, plumbed into the mains and with 3-6kw heating elements in 5 litre or larger boilers to make quality beverages at home. The Giotto Evoluzione can make the same high quality drinks), without the hassle.

Inside This Review

Overview	1
How it works	3
Inside the Giotto Evoluzione	4
A detailed Tour	5
Key Features	6
Using the Giotto Evoluzione	13
Final Thoughts	14
Gallery	15

The details were correct at the time of writing, but the manufacturer and Bella Barista reserve the right to change the technical specification of the packaging, machines and any accessories supplied with the machine (including quantity and type of accessories supplied)

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Overview – cont.

These legendary machines have been reborn and improved under the care of Rocket Espresso. The Giotto is a great machine both for the customer to use and the reseller to support. It will provide years of reliable service with the minimum of maintenance. Once in position on the counter the machine looks nice and does not dominate on a standard sized work surface. The height of the machine is very convenient and gives plenty of room under standard height kitchen cupboards. It has a nice large cup warming tray. Placing the Giotto Evoluzione in a corner is ideal, especially when located near the sink.

Note: My model apparently has the lower feet (optional), but I am recommending that Bella Barista have lower feet on their machines as standard, because it looks so good

The Giotto Evoluzione comes well packed, in a tough box and with comprehensive documentation covering all aspects of operation, routine maintenance and production of espresso based drinks. A valuable addition to the Italian manufacturer's written User guide that comes free with the Giotto Evoluzione.

Very well packed inner box, protected by double packing in an air-cell filled outer by Bella Barista

Even if you are completely new to coffee making and this type of machine, you will have no problem making all those great coffee drinks in a very short time The Giotto Evoluzione is easy to keep clean, a quick wipe with a damp cloth and a buff with a micro fibre cloth is all that's required to keep it looking great. The more complex tasks such as backflushing and descaling are actually very easy to do and the supplied Bella Barista user guide explains how to do them in detail.

The Giotto Evoluzione positioned in the corner of my kitchen

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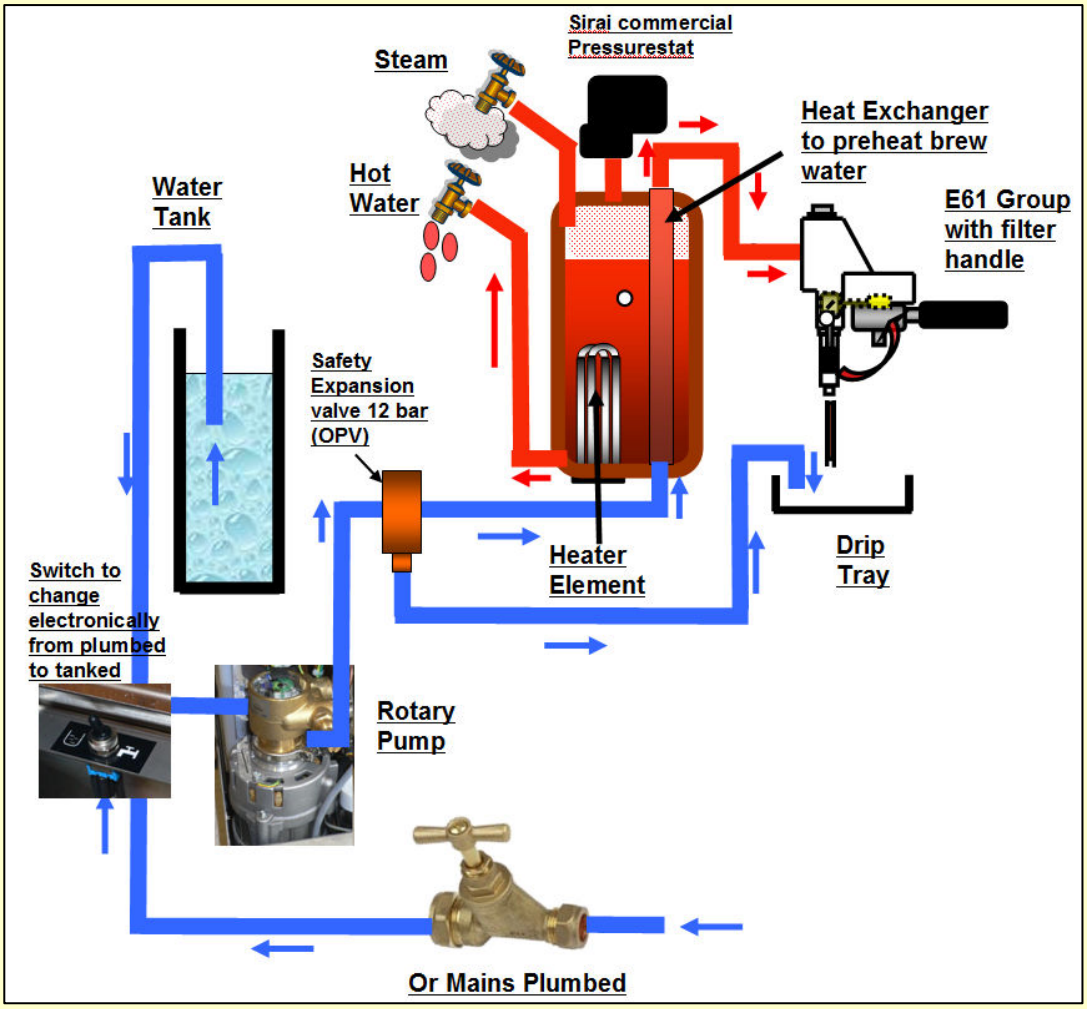
How it works



The diagram shows a simplified diagram of the Giotto ***(although the boiler shown is vertical, rather than horizontal as in the Evoluzione, the principle is exactly the same though).*** *The pump keeps the boiler about 60% filled with water that is heated and kept at a pressure of 1.2 bar (about 22 psi). The temperature of this water is above boiling point and has an area of steam above (similar to a pressure cooker).*

Steam

The pipe for the steam wand is at the top of the boiler (in the steam area) as the steam tap is opened, steam is forced through the steam pipe and as the pressure drops more of the water instantly flashes to steam, giving a continuous supply.

Hot Water

The pipe for the hot water tap is submerged below the waterline in the boiler. As the hot water tap is opened, steam pressure forces the hot water from the boiler through the pipe and out of the hot water outlet.

Coffee Brew Water

Coffee brew water for the group does not actually come from the water in the boiler, but is pumped directly from the tank through a "heat exchanger" (essentially, a big copper tube) that passes through the hot boiler. As the cold water from the water tank passes through this tube it is heated to the correct temperature for brewing coffee.

Lifting the lever starts the pumping of brew water, lowering the lever stops the pump and additionally releases the pressure (all 140 psi of it) from the group, so you can remove the filter handle safely, (the excess water goes into the drip tray when pressure is released)

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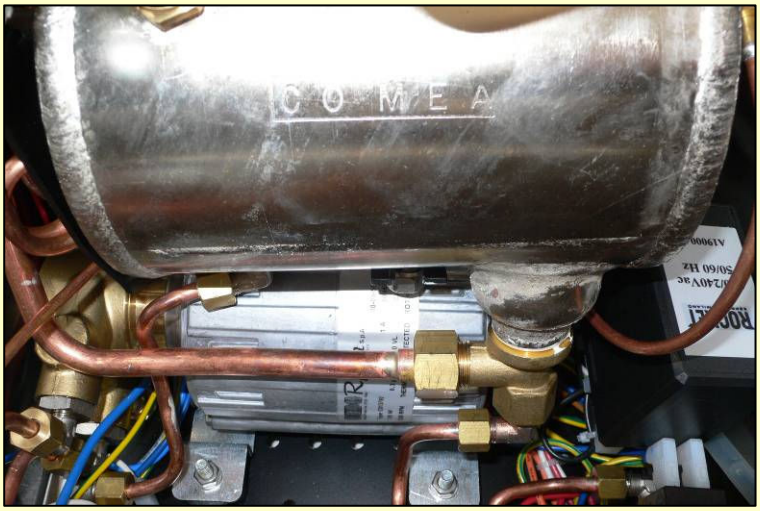
Inside the Giotto Evoluzione

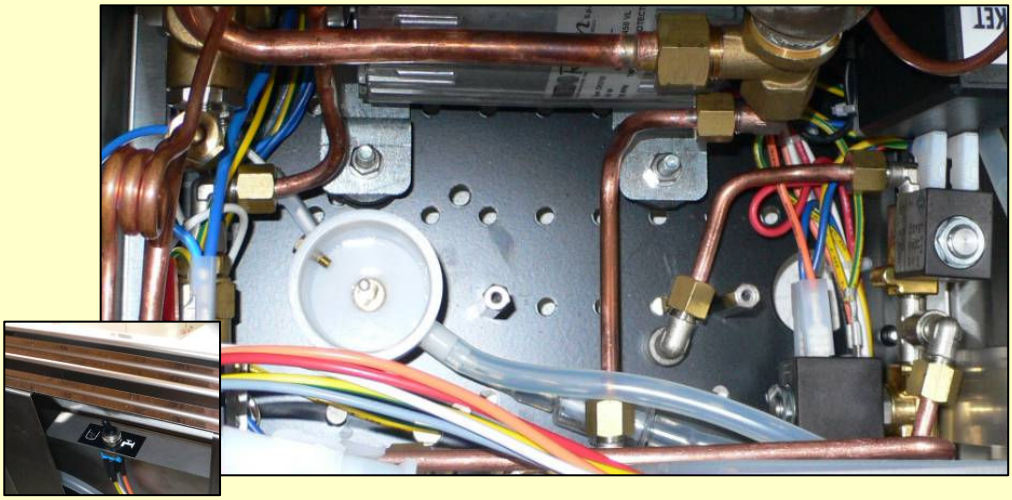
A close inspection of the Giotto Evoluzione shows a machine that has all the usual refinements internally that one would expect. Internal build quality is good, with great attention to detail. Components are well positioned, neatly assembled; all cables are well away from hot spots and comprehensively tied to avoid movement.

Some internal shots below;

The powerhouse of the machine accessible from the top, with the removal of only 4 screws



The rotary pump and motor pump tucked under the boiler



Clever managements of the tanked water supply with electro-valves on far right controlling tanked or plumbed operation via electric switch (inset)

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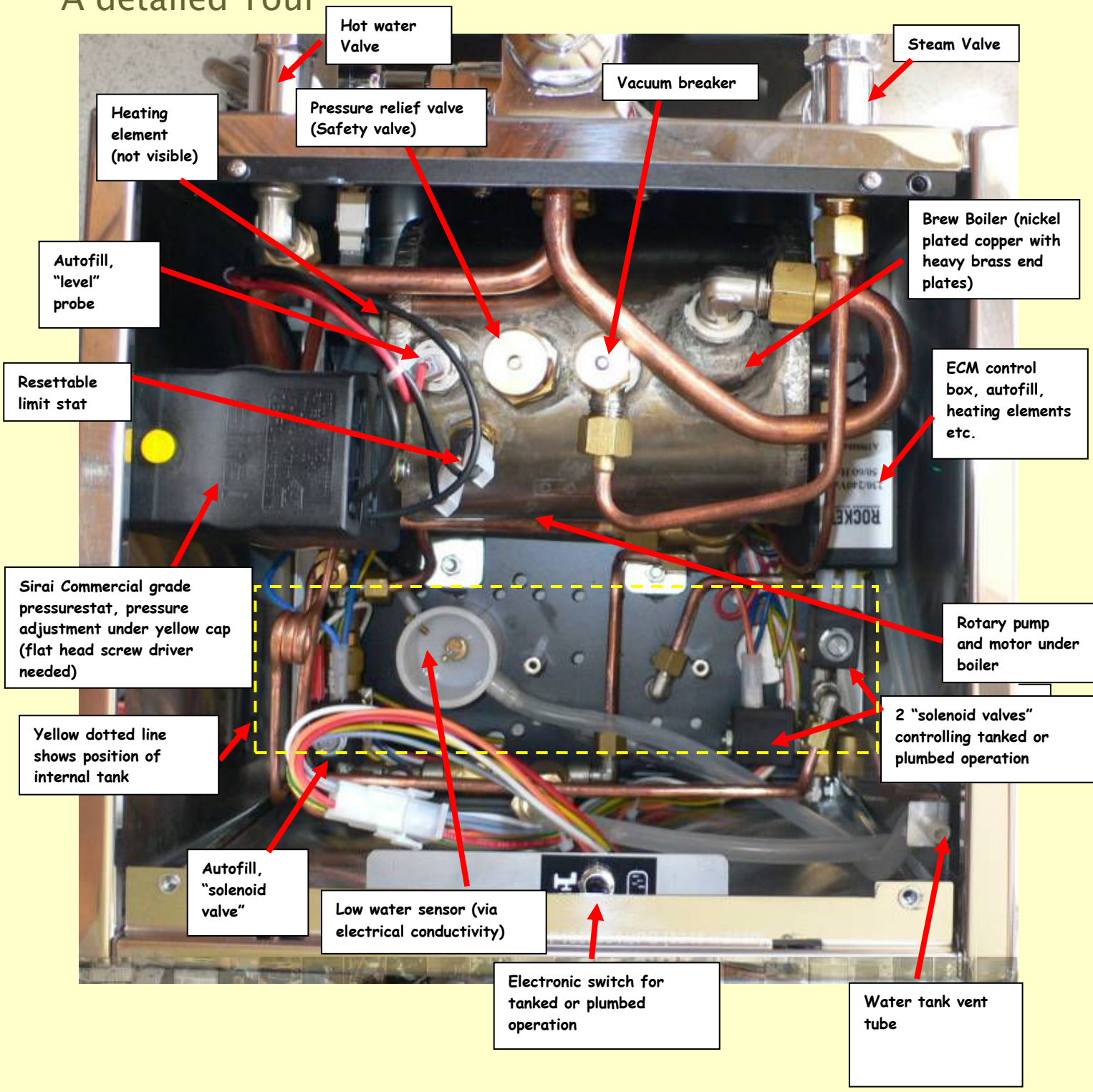
A detailed Tour


Hot water Valve
Steam Valve
Vacuum breaker
Pressure relief valve (Safety valve)
Heating element (not visible)
Brew Boiler (nickel plated copper with heavy brass end plates)
Autofill, "level" probe
ECM control box, autofill, heating elements etc.
Resettable limit stat
Sirai Commercial grade pressurestat, pressure adjustment under yellow cap (flat head screw driver needed)
Rotary pump and motor under boiler
2 "solenoid valves" controlling tanked or plumbed operation
Yellow dotted line shows position of internal tank
Autofill, "solenoid valve"
Low water sensor (via electrical conductivity)
Electronic switch for tanked or plumbed operation
Water tank vent tube

Above, the major components of the Giotto Evoluzione, once the case is removed accessibility for maintenance is good. removal/refitting of the case is moderately time consuming

This machine would be fairly simple to work on for most of the major components requiring replacement over time.

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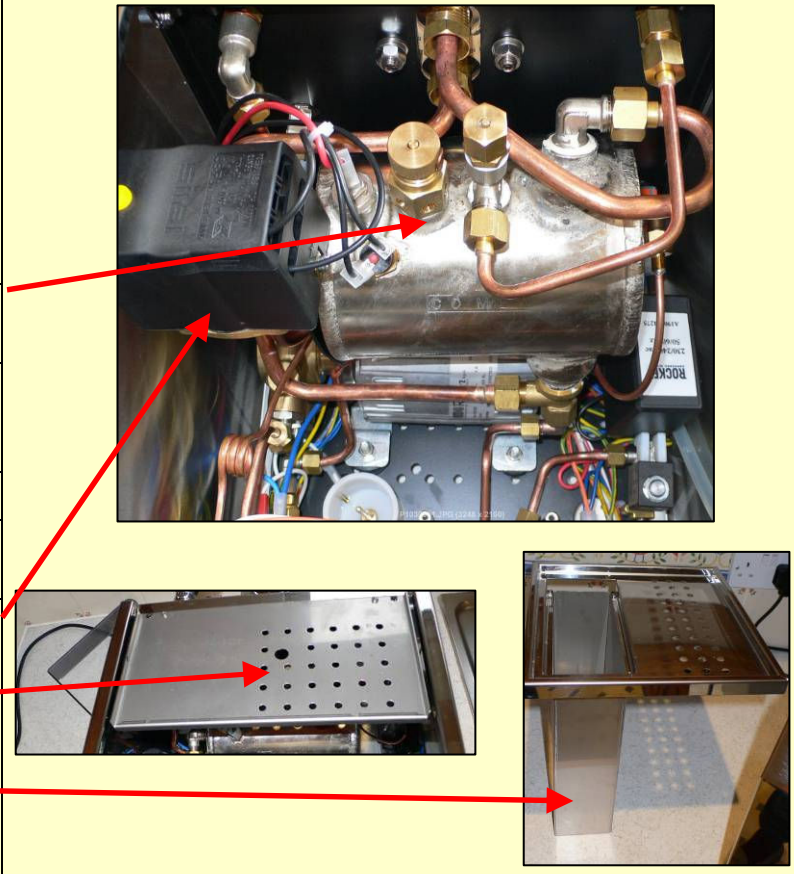
Key Features

- Quiet rotary pump, with facility to adjust pressure externally
- Mains plumbed or internal tanked operation at the flick of a switch (proper drain facility supplied)
- Ball Joint steam and water arms (no burn)
- Nice quality internal water tank
- "Clever" low water sensor and tanked water supply mechanism
- "non compression" steam & water valves
- Adjustable commercial grade Sirai pressure stat.
- Attractive retro design and chromed steel case
- Separate brew and steam pressure gauges
- 2 portafilter holders and 2 filter baskets as standard

Item/Description	Picture	Comments
Chromed Steel external case. The case is a good fit, but does require care during removal and refitting. Access to some components is quickly achieved from the top via removal of 4 screws. More involved maintenance requires case removal, which is moderately time consuming. One or two areas need a little care and may pose difficulties for the inexperienced.		
Nice quality nickel plated boiler with good brazing and heavy brass endplates		
Good routing of internal cables and pipes, avoiding hot spots and areas of vibration scuffing		
High quality internal components		
All components quite accessible. This makes servicing easy		
Very accessible pressurestat that is not too sensitive to adjust. This makes pressure adjustment easy and can be adjusted without removing the entire case; just the water tank carrier and 1 interior plate need to be removed (4 screws).		

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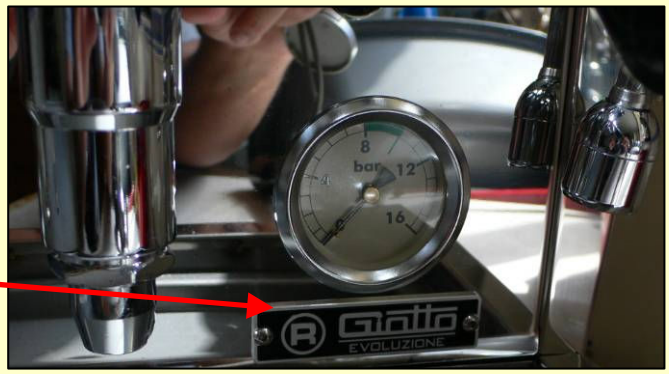
A nice quality metal badge. For a change a machine with a badge that actually is in keeping with it's value. It is even screwed in place, which means it won't fall off….something that occasionally happens on some espresso machines with constant exposure to heat and steam. Readers of past reviews will know that I am not a fan of cheap badges, especially when stuck on, or even worse, not level.	
Nice quality cold water tank holding almost 3 litres and simply drops in the top, **no tubes to worry about**. Refilling can be done with the tank in or out of the machine and there is a handy access hatch for filling. The grab handles make removing a full or empty tank, much easier.	
Nice large cup warming tray. You can get plenty of cups on there, definitely no lack of space. The little hatch for refilling means you don't have to remove every cup. Note: I have not removed the protective plastic film from the cup tray surround as this will eventually become someone else's machine and I will leave them to do this.	
The Giotto Evoluzione is heavy, because the internal frame is rigid and constructed with a quality (thick) steel. **The machine is difficult to slide around. You will want to slide it around to refill it if it is under cupboards.** **The feet have been improved from previous models, but annoyingly, are still not height adjustable for "levelling the machine" when using a twin spout portafilter**	Problem solved for a few pounds. Stick 4 of these little felt pads on the feet and it slides about with one hand! Alternatively use Teflon "glide pads" and you can slide it around with 1 finger!

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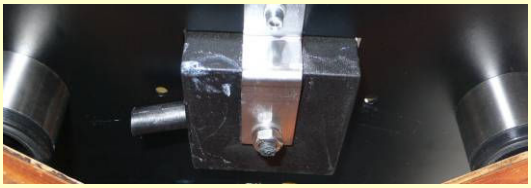
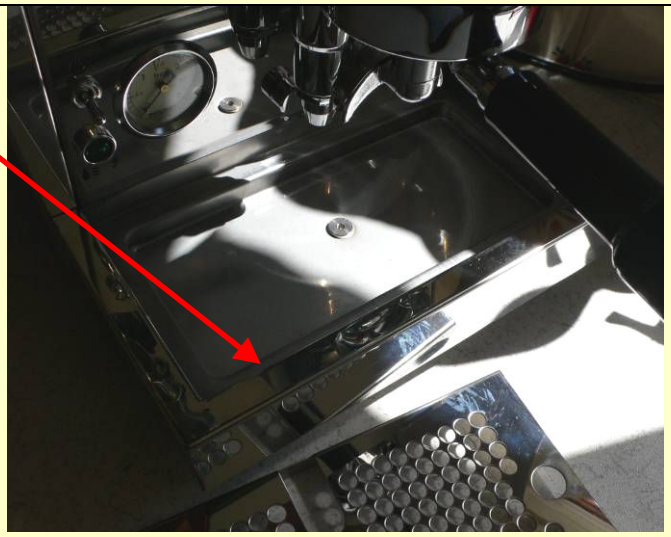
The drip tray is not the largest I have seen and holds around 250-300ml before it needs emptying (it can hold more but you will spill liquid whilst trying to empty it).

It is all steel and nice quality, plus it has a hole (plugged) all ready to open for the drain facility (shown below) if running mains plumbed I do my cooling flushes into the cups I am going to use and have a tupperware container I place under the group when cleaning and flushing..

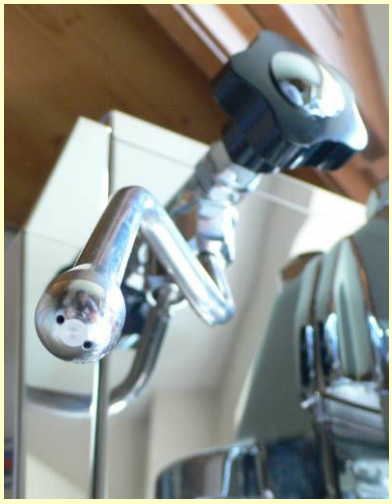




Professional quality no compression steam valve and ball joint "no burn" steam wand. It was also long enough to reach to the bottom of all my smaller pitchers. The Giotto Evoluzione is a moderate steamer and it's 2 hole tip foamed medium quanitites of milk with ease..

The machines come factory set to 1.0 bar, this is not high enough for proper brew temperature or steaming. I have recommended that all Bella Barista machines come factory set to 1.2 bar.

In addition the machines steaming capacity and power would benefit greatly from using a 1400W heating element…Rocket Espresso are currently testing a 1400W heating element.



I like the "no burn" ball-joint mounted steam and hot water arms. The large knobs with "non-compression valves", much more tactile and look good too.

"No Burn" *– a wand with an airspace preventing the walls from heating up when water (or steam) is drawn. Even these wands do eventually get hot…BUT cleaning the milk from the steam wand is MUCH easier.*

"non compression" valves *- Releasing pressure on a spring allows the valve seal to open, closing simply compresses the spring again which then presses against the seal to close. As opposed to* ***direct compression*** *of a washer by screwing in the tap. Commonly used on commercial machines, as the seals connot be damaged by "ham-fisted" operators closing them too tightly.*

The more I think about it, the more I am convinced even "no burn" steam wands should have those black rubber silicone burn protector sleeves on them

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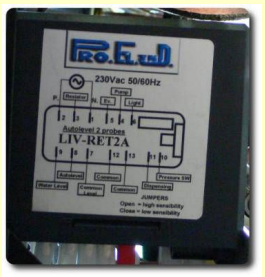
The equipment supplied with the Giotto: The review machine had 2 portafilter holders (very good quality) with single and double baskets and the usual plastic tamper, measuring scoop, blind filter, group cleaning brush, coffee measure and all hoses. **It's a very comprehensive and excellent set of equipment and Rocket Espresso have taken notice of earlier feedback in this area where certain items were not supplied.**

The portafilters are also a much better fit than in previous models.

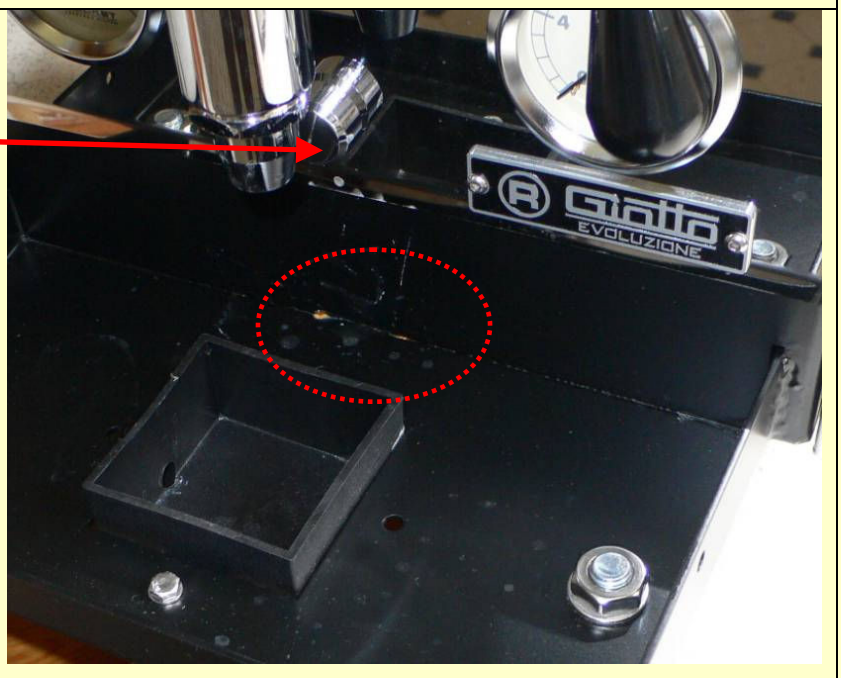
The machine switches off the heating element when low on water, the boiler then goes cold and the pump will not run. However, there is NO low water alarm the only visible indication that the machine is off apart from the slowly decending boiler pressure gauge, is the green power light flashing. This is not so easy to see in bright sunlight and it is not apparent from a distance, or from a casual glance that the machine has switched off the heating element. I really think that an audible alarm should be added. It can be very irritating to go to make a coffee only to find that the machine switched off the heating element an hour ago and then have to wait 20 minutes or more for it to warm up (this point was also made in previous reviews).



I asked Rocket Espresso why they had not changed to Gicar which I previously recommended because they have a low water alarm built in, They said they had actually found the boxes they currently use, even more reliable than Gicar. I expressed concern that the spares price of the Gicar was very reasonable and they assured me that their own box would be priced at a similar level.

The expansion valve vents water (due to thermal expansion) into the drip tray. This is a little when warming up and a few drops during/at the end of a coffee making session.

When the drip tray is removed for emptying (usually at the end of a coffee making session)….the vent will drip a small amout of water onto the welds of the steel frame. If this is not wiped up rust will start to form as can be seen, because the water sits in this area underneath the drip tray. **This could easily be solved during manufacture by the application of a small bead of black silicone and smoothed to 45 degrees with a wet finger. If I owned this machine, I would personally run a small bead of black silicone along the weld.**



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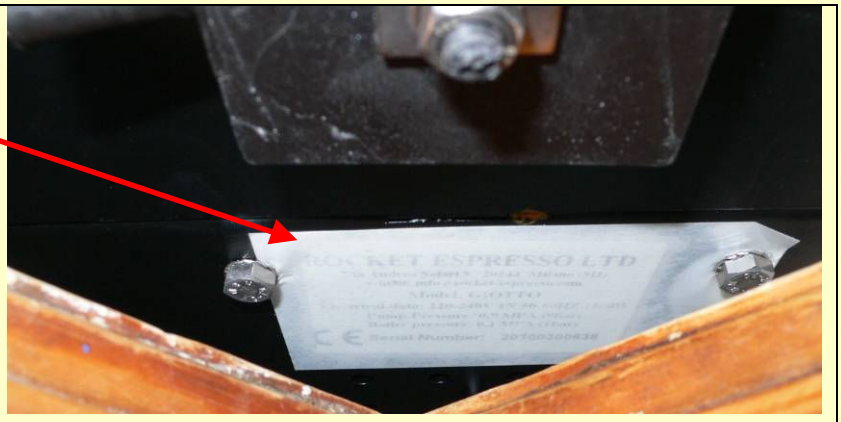
The rating plate, placed on the underside of the machine

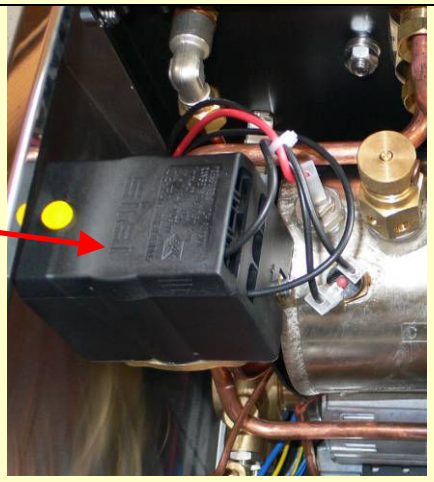


Both steam and brew pressure gauges, which look fantastic and really nice quality. Set off nicely with a big chromed bezel.

The Steam and brew pressure gauges were not straight. Rocket Espresso realise this is a problem and are in the process of trying to get tabs fitted to the gauges so that they will always be installed straight. This annoys them as much as it does me.

The new machine is greatly complemented by the use of a Commercial grade heavy duty Sirai pressurestat (left of picture). Although the Sirai pressurestats cost significantly more, they are known to be very reliable and, accurate and **almost never fail in domestic use.**

You adjust them by removing the yellow cap to reveal the adjuster screw….you will need a lot more turns than you are used to say when adjusting a cheaper MATER Pressurestat.



These pressurestats are a little noisier, due to the heavy duty relay inside them. They also take up a lot of space…BUT, they're good!

I think it's time that all manufacturers started to insulate the boilers of their machines…It's not so much a complaint as an observation. Currently most manufacturers do not, but more are insulating them as standard e.g. Quickmill, Izzo, Expobar etc.

I mentioned this in reviews of previous models and think the Giotto Evoluzione would also benefit from such insulation in the areas of, component life, steaming and reduced power consumption. Rocket has promised to look into insulating the boiler this time round.

The heating element (1200 watt element) is stated as being, made from special long life material (5 times longer than normal elements). I think this is great, because heating element replacement is one of life's less pleasant tasks. They are currently testing a 1400W heating element and I am hoping this is made of the same material.

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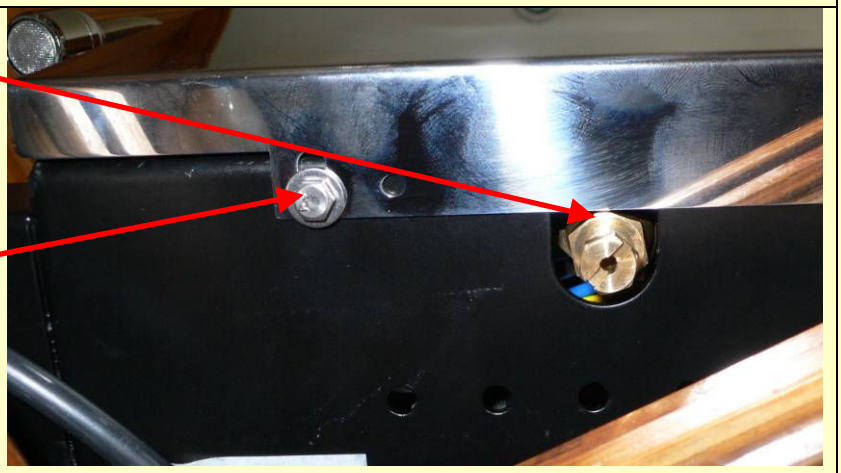
The thermosyphon tubes have been enlarged, the reasons stated are: "*Superior layout of thermosyphon system resulting in optimum extraction. Generously dimensioned. 20% higher volume as with comparable machines on the market."…* **and**…*"Optimised boiler capacity to thermosyphon system ratio. Results in fast heat up time"*	I always let a machine heat up for a while before I use it…usually about 30 minutes or more. What I can say is the Giotto was ready in 30 minutes and some other machines are not quite there after 30 min. In addition a thermosyphon with increased capacity can only be an advantage in cold conditions or when pulling lots of shots. My internal inspection shows a much longer route for the thermosyphon pipes than before, especially the top pipe (probably to make connections easier). I suspect this was also a reason for increasing the diameter of the pipes.
This is a minor niggle and is becoming more common. It's nice to see a machine with a factory fitted UK 3 pin plug, but I do wish they would go to the trouble of fitting the exposed pins with those plastic "plug" protectors to prevent any risk of scratching in transit.	
The machine has external access to adjust the pressure of the rotary pump. Although it does allow you to adjust pressure without removing the moderately difficult to remove case, it is in a tricky position, underneath the machine. In addition the side panel fixings would have to be loosened to relieve the case sufficiently to get a socket in there to **release the lock nut.** ***I would also personally use a mains plumbed pressure range of 2-3 bar and a pressure reducer if necessary to prevent exceeding 3 bar. This is contrary to the Insert sheet in the Rocket Espresso instructions, which state limiting line pressures in excess of 5 bars***	
The mains water connector underneath, which also handily swivels in any direction. **I have no idea why the earth bond cable is on the outside and not the inside…..Totally baffled, if it was my choice this would be inside the machine where it can't catch on anything….perhaps some EU rule?**	

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Just a click and you can switch from mains to plumbed. No reaching for a lever underneath the machine. Apparently people loved it at the Milan show and I must admit it's pretty cool. It works by actuating a couple of electro-valves inside the machine. One opens and another closes and you are on mains operation….flick it back and the reverse happens and you are plumbed. *People who know me, know that I like engineering simplicity (where it does the job)…this is a very elegant, and cool, solution to a simple problem. Me, I like a 2 way manual valve with a lever moved by the Mk1 human being, but I'm old, poor and perhaps biased?*	

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Using the Giotto Evoluzione – simple and easy to use!

The Giotto Evoluzione runs hot, but not too hot, unlike many other Heat Exchanger (HX) machines. Due to the compromise of any HX machine, between continuously available steam and production of brew water for espresso. The pressure in the boiler is directly related to the temperature, a higher pressure gives higher temperatures. Because of the way HX machines work most require a cooling flush prior to drawing the first in a series of espressos, the Giotto Evoluzione in common with other machines of this type also requires this "cooling flush". **However, Giotto did not need as large a cooling flush as many HX machines**

Pressure Settings

You can alter the pressure/temperature of the boiler if required; **I found the factory settings of 1.0 bar to be less than optimal for brewing or steaming. I raised it to 1.2 bar which was far better and all Bella Barista machines will be factory set to 1.2 bar.**

Espresso

As long as a cooling flush is performed, the Giotto Evoluzione makes consistently good espressos and easily maintains the temperature during the pour. HX recovery is fast enough that domestic volumes of espresso will be absolutely no problem, but **not** too fast, giving advanced users scope to use this recovery time to try for different optimum brew temperatures depending on the coffee used.

As a rotary pumped machine with a balanced bypass, brew pressure when tested was set to 9.0 bar and was stable, but could easily be adjusted to whatever you desire. The take of for the brew pressure gauge is at the pump head and outside the sealed brew circuit (the correct place), so unaffected by water expansion effects.

Hot Water

It's nice to have really hot water on tap, recovery time after drawing hot water for an Americano is very fast. Although I always say for regular hot water production a kettle is a better option in areas where lime scale is a problem and saves having to descale your machine so often.

I felt the Giotto did not need as large a cooling flush as many HX machines

The E61 group

The E61 group is an industry standard (as are many of the components in the machine), so parts such as, pumps, gaskets, shower screens, filter holders, filter holder handles etc. are all a standard size and readily available from multiple suppliers. This also means that the pricing of these spares is highly competitive.

Steam Production

The Giotto Evoluzione has reasonable steam performance; it takes a little while to get used to steaming, especially with smaller quantities of milk.

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Final Thoughts – so what's the bottom line!

You might be forgiven for thinking that I didn't like the Giotto Evoluzione, but you would be wrong. I liked this machine a lot, so much so, that I went to the trouble of being very thorough with the review. Sure there are a few things that could be improved to make the machine even better. I felt that bringing these out in a review would provide more incentive for the improvements to be made,

It definitely holds its own against other similar machines and is significantly better than more expensive offerings from the competition. I truly believe it is one of the better rotary pumped, HX machines you can buy for the money. It also works really well, usually I am very quick to place my Duetto back on the counter and pack up a review machine. I have been in no particular hurry to do this with the Giotto Evoluzione. I have had it on test for 4 weeks now and can only say it has performed flawlessly.

Anything you would change?

It's heavy at 23kg, but not too large, although slightly deeper than some machines. It's also not too tall and I do prefer machines that are a little more balanced in this way. A commercial 1 group (which would make similar beverages), would be significantly bigger, heavier and overkill for the home user.

As a reviewer, with my 20/20 hindsight, there were a few things, although the machine is priced really competitively especially considering the features it has. These have been fully bought out in the review. But don't be unduly alarmed they are minor improvements on a machine that has many admirers and do little to detract from its day to day operation. Importantly they are small things on a machine at such a competitive price when compared to other similar machines.

There are people who are going to love the looks of the Giotto (I did) and as a lifestyle choice for some, nothing else will do. It is a fine looking machine and it makes espresso as well or better than many other machines in the prosumer class.

"the Giotto Evoluzione, represents better value for money than the Izzo Alex MK II dual water"

Conclusions

The machine nearest competitor is the dual water Izzo Alex and the Giotto Evoluzione costs a little less. Its rotary pump is actually quieter than an Izzo Alex (better mounts, heavier base frame). **Bella Barista will hate me saying this: the overall quality and components used in the Giotto Evoluzione is so good, it represents better value for money than the Izzo Alex MKII dual water.** It also looks far better (my opinion) and has a much larger onboard internal water tank. Sure there are some differences between the two machines and you need to read both reviews to decide which you feel is better for you personally.

It needs a slightly smaller cooling flush than most HX machines and the water refilling/management is easier than on many machines. Detection of low water level is excellent (reliable) and the entire tank is used before the machine switches off the heating element (and pump). I would like to see Rocket Espresso address as many of the recommendations as possible in this review. I think it's a lost opportunity and I think it's a machine that so good, it deserves that little extra.

The Giotto Evoluzione is a great machine, with fantastic retro styling, that any owner would, and should, be proud of….makes great coffee too!

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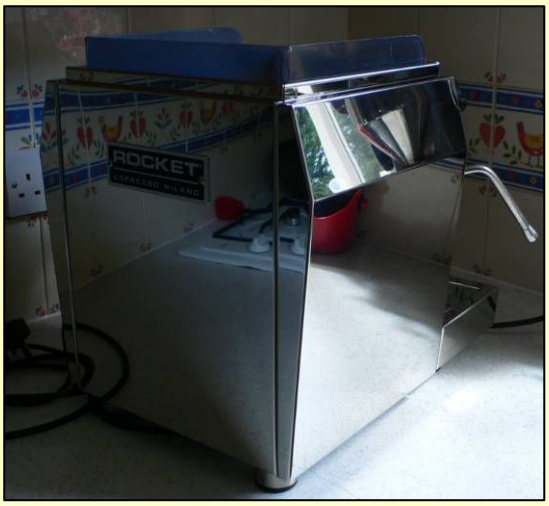
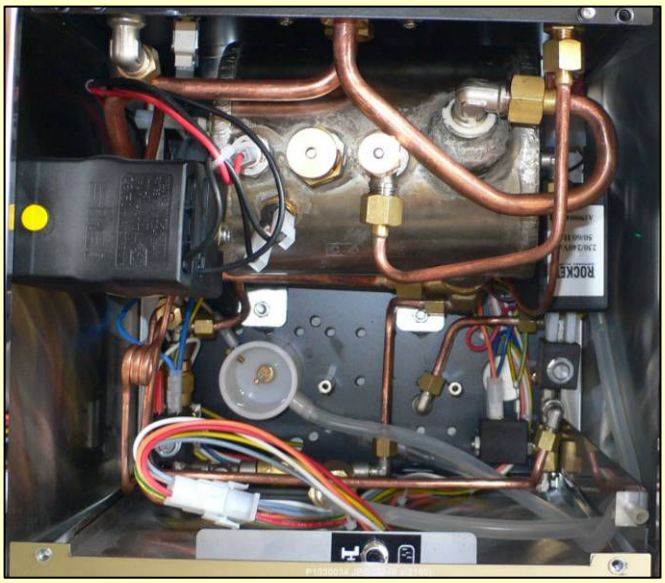
Gallery – A few pictures of the Giotto Evoluzione

The beautiful lever operated E61 group, just waiting to make that espresso or latte!





Removing only the panel gives reasonable access, removing 1 or more side panels gives very good access for maintenance/servicing

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